

'FATHER, FORGIVE'

LONDON'S *Express Newspaper* carried this report from Caroline Wheeler on Genocide of the Christian Martyrs by ISIS – crucifying thousands of Christians in Syria.

The Express notes that many readers will find this image shocking, but feels it is vital to show the true horror of ISIS. And now a Jewish survivor of Nazi terror is leading the crusade to rescue the Christian Martyrs.



The body of a man crucified by Islamic State killers hangs beside a road in Syria – ISIS propaganda picture.

Day Of Prayer For Syria

OPEN Doors invites you to join in a *Day Of Prayer For Syria* on 17 October.

Last year Open Doors organised a *Day Of Prayer For Iraq* which saw nearly 7,000 Australian Christians pray in 48 churches and even more prayer groups around Australia. This year Open Doors is responding to the crisis in Syria and wants churches throughout Australia to join them in prayer. Anyone can register to download the free prayer resources at:

www.opendoors.org.au/Syria and organise a prayer event for their local church. The prayer resources will be emailed to you by 2 October and will contain information about the situation unfolding in Syria along with suggested prayer points.

Invite your friends and church to pray with you as Australian Christians gather together in prayer. While the need is great our God is far greater and He has a plan for Syria.

SCORES have already been murdered by Islamic State and thousands forced to leave ancient Christian communities in northeastern Syria and western Iraq as the extremists demand they convert to Islam, pay an extortionate rate of tax or face execution. Some have even been crucified.

Despite concerns being raised by religious leaders including the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, the plight of Christian refugees is largely being ignored by the western world.

Now a charity, which is receiving funds from Jewish peer George Weidenfeld, who escaped Nazi-occupied Austria with the help of British Christians, is taking matters into its own hands by mounting a series of rescue missions to save the Syrian Christians. Lord Weidenfeld said: 'I have a debt to repay.'

So far the charity, Barnabas Fund has liberated 158 Christians from Syria and found them a new home in Poland. Its founder and international director Patrick Sookhdeo has recently returned from a visit to Eastern Europe, where he was seeking refuge for the hundreds of thousands of Syrian Christians who continue to live under the tyranny of IS.

VOLUME 78 NUMBER 7

ISSUE DATE:
1 October 2015

FILE: NL 2015-10-01

ISSN: 1033-7903

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SUBSCRIPTION:
Free On Request

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PUBLISHED BY:
New Life Australia Ltd

ABN: 15 005 035 138

CONTRIBUTORS PLEASE
NOTE:

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What's Missing In Australian Public Life?

THERE are two qualities sadly lacking in Australian public life, qualities which, by contrast, ought to be evident in the life of every believer.

Believers are what they are by the grace of God. We enjoy His favour not as an award for good behaviour or because we deserve it, but because God favours us contrary to our deserving. That's called grace. The fact that our sin is forgiven does not reflect our superiority in any way to anyone else. We are all fellow beggars, 'nothing in my hand I bring'. God has favoured us by opening our eyes to see our own spiritual poverty and directing us to Christ, the certain ground of our forgiveness before God.

It is also clear that as well as forgiveness, God has taken up residence within us. He has moved into our lives in the person of the Holy Spirit, 'you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2.38). The Holy Spirit is an unseen, yet real person now living in us. He baptises us into Christ, He gives us gifts for ministry and He evidences His fruit, on display in the way believers live.

Of the two qualities largely lacking in our political leaders, one is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and the other is the fruit of our Christian hope. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is faithfulness (Galatians 5.22), this is the characteristic commitment to another through thick and thin. It is on display in our marriage vows, 'for better, for worse, richer, poorer, in sickness and in health'.

The downfall of another Australian PM is a reminder that the more effective enemy of an Australian political leader does not sit opposite, but behind him or her in the House of Representatives. It is a sad day when our leaders seem to be so disloyal and self-serving.

The second characteristic, the fruit of hope, is endurance, perseverance, the ability to keep going and doing right no matter how tough the headwinds (1 Thessalonians 1.3), it is the idea of loyal constancy.

These are not qualities unique to the believer – we see them in many of our fellow countrymen, especially evident in the ANZAC tradition on the battlefield. But for the believer we expect these qualities to permeate our lives, because in these characteristics, God's energising, sanctifying Holy Spirit evidences Himself within.

Our earthly leaders let us down and leave us no example to follow, but the perfect God/man, the Lord Jesus, set His face steadfastly to Jerusalem to suffer and die for undeserving rebels. What an unfailing example He is to us – another reminder that we look to Him, 'the One who suffered outside the city gate to make people holy through His own blood (Hebrews 13.12).

We live for the Jerusalem that is above (Hebrews 12.22) and in doing so, this faithfulness, steadfastness, loyalty will be evident in our lives and, we pray, be duplicated in the lives of our children also, so that they will be people of authentic character.

It was the late President Harry Truman who said, 'If you want a friend in this city (Washington DC), get a dog!' What a sad, yet seemingly realistic assessment. May it not be so among us!

All our faithfulness is to reflect His 'because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.' (Lamentations 3.22,23)

– David Cook

MATTERS FOR PRAYER

VIETNAM & CAMBODIA: No Sanctuary For Degar Christians

THE Degar (Montagnards) are collectively the indigenous tribal people of Vietnam. Today a remnant still survives in the Central Highlands, although systematic repression and violent persecution at the hands of the Communist regime in Hanoi is threatening their very existence.

Hanoi deems Degar Christianity a 'reactionary' and 'evil' religion. Those refusing to renounce their faith can expect prison and torture. Many have fled into Cambodia, which rejects them as illegal migrants and repatriates them at Vietnam's request.

On 11 September the Cambodian government gave the UN refugee agency in Phnom Penh three months to repatriate some 200 Degar Christians or Cambodian security forces will do it themselves.

Pray that this crisis will shine a spot-light on one of Vietnam's darkest secrets. Please pray for the Degar Christians and Vietnam and Cambodia.

– Elizabeth Kendal, International Religious Liberty Analyst And Advocate, Adjunct Research Fellow In The Centre For The Study Of Islam And Other Faiths At The Melbourne School Of Theology And Director Of Advocacy For Christian Faith & Freedom Based In Canberra, Australia.

Please Pray That:

- Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen will protect the Degar Christian refugees and that this crisis will shine a spotlight on one of Vietnam's darkest secrets.
- Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang will be forced to end the repression and violent persecution of Vietnam's indigenous Degar Christians and that this crisis will shine a spotlight on Vietnam's critical decline in religious freedom.
- our gracious Lord will intervene for His precious Degar Church; may Degar Christians know His presence, comfort, provision and protection.
- the Lord will intervene for religious freedom in Vietnam.

'But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.'
(Amos 5.24 ESV)



TURN BACK THE BATTLE: Isaiah Speaks to Christians Today.

With persecution escalating globally, **Elizabeth Kendal** calls us to revisit the prophecy of Isaiah, maintaining that Isaiah 1-39 provides an unambiguous treatise on how God's people are to respond to persecution, suffering and existential threat. For purchasing options, visit:

www.turnbackthebattle.com

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Day Of Prayer For Syria
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2-4pm
Saturday 17 October

The UN, Saudi Arabia And International Human Rights

THE United Nations Human Rights Council has appointed Saudi Arabia as the Chair of the five-member Consultative Group which is tasked with finding candidates to fill human rights posts around the world, investigating for and reporting back to the UNHRC in Geneva.

Thus these 'experts', who report on countries such as Sudan, or on issues such as religious liberty or 'Islamophobia' (for example), will have been approved by Saudi Arabia.

Yet Saudi Arabia is one of the world's worst human rights abusers. There is absolutely no religious freedom; public expression of Christianity is forbidden; house churches are banned; apostates are killed. May this episode expose the situation in Saudi Arabia and the shortcomings of the UN. Please pray for the Church in Saudi Arabia.

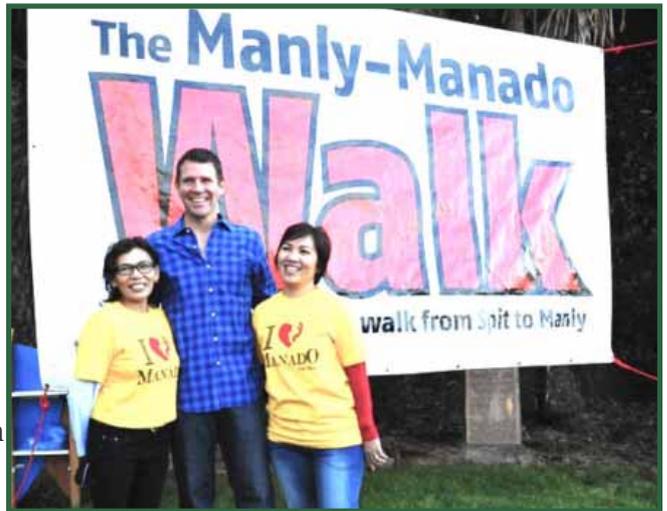
– Elizabeth Kendal

'STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL'

NSW Premier Opens 10th Annual Manly-Manado Walk To Raise Funds For Compassion's Child Survival Program

HUNDREDS of people joined in the Manly-Manado walk this year raising over \$23,000 for vulnerable mothers and their babies living in Manado, Indonesia.

Organised by Seaforth Baptist Church, who has partnered with Compassion Australia for over ten years, this year's walk from Spit Bridge to Manly was officially opened by NSW Premier Mike Baird. Mr Baird said it was encouraging to see his own Northern Beaches community get behind a great cause. 'For the past ten years the Manly community has come together to show its support for our Indonesian friends and it's great to see that compassion on display again today,' said Premier Baird.



To date, over 2,400 people have taken part in the Manly-Manado walk, which has raised a total of nearly \$300,000 over ten years.

Justice Pastor Vikki Howorth from Seaforth Baptist Church said the walk had grown over the years into a major community event that gave locals the opportunity to play their own part in making a difference in the lives of children and families in Manado. 'It's so encouraging to see the community get behind this cause,' she said. 'We are just one local church but through our partnership with Compassion we have had the opportunity to connect with Getsemani Baptist Church in Manado and support them to transform the lives of mothers and babies living in poverty. It's a partnership that our church has been inspired by and benefited from.'

This year, participants were each given a picture of one of the 50 mothers and babies in the Child Survival Program in Manado as a representation of whom they were walking for.

Compassion Australia CEO Tim Hanna said the partnership between Seaforth Baptist Church and Compassion was an outstanding example of how the local church can be empowered to release children from poverty in Jesus' name. 'Compassion is all about the local church. We partner with local churches in the countries we work in to fulfil our mission and these partnerships are always based on mutual respect, common goals and a belief in the value of children,' he said. 'We are so grateful for our partnership with Seaforth Baptist Church and the many other churches we partner with throughout Australia. The Manly-Manado walk is a fantastic event because it brings together so many people who are passionate about releasing children from poverty.'

Compassion's Child Survival Program supports vulnerable mothers and their babies living in poverty during their first critical years of life. It operates in 26 developing countries around the world and is implemented by local churches. For more information or to donate please visit:

www.compassion.com.au/support-child-survival

About Compassion Australia

Compassion, Australia's second largest child sponsorship organisation, is part of a global network of funding countries and 26 developing countries that is Compassion International. Together we are a Christian holistic child development organisation committed to working in partnership with local churches to foster the development of 1.7 million children living in extreme poverty. Around 100,000 of these children are currently supported by over 75,000 Australian sponsors.

**Read: *Who Are The Brisbane Christian Fellowship?*
by David Holden, at www.defenceofthefaith.org**

SAT-7 Programs Provide Biblical Education

SAT-7, Christian satellite television ministry to the Middle East and North Africa, works to share the Gospel with anyone who seeks hope and encouragement.

Gaza and Palestine are known for giant cement walls, violent attacks, or being 'the world's largest prison.' But this area of the world is also known for a Christian Bible college! Many people are unaware that there are several thousands of Christians living in the Gaza Strip. Partnering with SAT-7, the Bethlehem Bible College (BBC) seeks to strengthen and grow the Church in the Middle East.

Founded in 1979 by local Arab Christians, the BBC saw a diminishing Christian population in the Palestinian community and sought to revitalize it. Now, 35 years later, the BBC has grown and features two satellite campuses in Gaza and Nazareth, providing a biblical education to more than 200 students. These students will become prominent pastors and ministry leaders throughout the Middle East.

Despite having three on-site campuses, travel can be difficult for students and teachers in the Middle East. To enter 'restricted' areas, the BBC uses Skype® to launch a series of classes for Palestinian Christians in the surrounding area. This offers critical opportunities for Christian students who would otherwise be unable to attend school. Skype also offers faculty a chance to operate in difficult areas. In addition to individualized training, the BBC produces quality television programs that are shared through SAT-7 broadcasts. These programs reinforce and support family ideals and nonviolent approaches to bring about change in the world. The Christian message behind these programs encourage co-operation, understanding of individuals, and reconciliation.

SAT-7 has been working with the Bethlehem Bible College to help the growing church throughout the Middle East for the last 15 years. Together, SAT-7 and the BBC offer an ideal way to bring Christian teaching directly to believers in the safety of their own homes, wherever they may live. Support for SAT-7 and the BBC can touch people in even the most 'restricted' areas of the Middle East and North Africa.

- www.sat7.org



Graduates from Theology, Mass Media and Tourism participate in Bethlehem Bible College's 28th Commencement



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John 1:18 NIV

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Abortion By Phone – How Many Will Die?

'THE new legal provision of medical abortions by phone – with no face-to-face doctor consultation – could lead to tragedy for women in country and remote areas,' FamilyVoice Australia research officer Ros Phillips says. 'At least one Australian woman has already died after undergoing a medical abortion with the drug RU486. She suffered a massive bacterial infection due to fragments of the baby left in her womb. It seems that medical help came too late to save her.'

'Yet the "Tabbot Foundation" claims that its phone-consultation-plus-abortion-pills-in-the post system would be especially helpful to women in regional areas who do not have ready access to medical services. These are the women who would suffer most from excessive blood loss or septicaemia following a medical abortion. They need to be within easy reach of medical help!'

Ros Phillips said once the abortion drugs are sent to the pregnant woman by post, there would be no guarantee that she would use them during the 63 day limit – or that she would not give them to someone else who did not fit the requirements.

'An abortion always results in one death – the unborn baby,' she said. 'Sometimes that results in lasting grief for the mother, who may have been coerced. But the Tabbot Foundation system could result in even greater tragedy.'

Australian Christian Lobby Managing Director Lyle Shelton said that, apart from taking the life of an unborn child, the drug was too dangerous to prescribe over the phone. 'In 2012, the Therapeutic Goods Administration told the US Senate that of 832 women who took the drug since 2006, 599 required surgery to remove the poisoned unborn baby after it failed to produce a miscarriage,' he says. 'Apart from the ethics of taking a human life, clearly this drug is not safe for women and is not a choice that should be encouraged, let alone offered for sale over the phone.'

Mr Shelton said that even the pro-abortion former head of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Andrew Pesce seemed to be urging caution in comments to the ABC this week.



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THE WHOLE WORD
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ACL Welcomes Ormond College's Move To Block Porn

ORMOND College's decision to block harmful pornography from its WiFi network is a win for the dignity and safety of young women according to the Australian Christian Lobby. Ormond College is the Uniting Church Residential College within the University of Melbourne.

ACL's spokesperson for the dignity of women, Wendy Francis, said the days of pornography being accepted as mainstream were numbered. 'Increasingly academics, ethicists, feminists and theologians alike are rejecting the idea that porn should continue to be seen as mainstream,' she says. Ms Francis praised Ormond College Master Dr Rufus Black for calling pornography for what it is: 'material incompatible with our understanding of what it is to treat people with respect and dignity.'

'Despite challenges to the pornography industry continuing to be dismissed by government authorities as anti-sex and as "moral panic" by lobbyists for porn such as Australia's Sex Party, there are clearly many in our community who recognise the damage that porn is doing to our society and doing all they can to change direction,' Ms Francis said.

Forming Leaders For A Digital Age

RIDLEY College, Melbourne's Annual Fundraising Dinner for 2015 will be held at the college on Friday 23 October Annual Fundraising Dinner 2015 starting at 6.30pm. Guy Mason, Lead Pastor at City On A Hill in Melbourne's CBD, will talk about *Leadership In A Digital Age*. Tickets cost \$75. Contact j.daw@ridley.edu.au to book.

Nepalese Christians Need Your Prayers

ALONG with India's fuel blockade, Nepal's leaders are fighting discontent within their borders. A new three-member government committee is holding talks with protestors, hoping to end over a month of violent unrest. Nepalese Christians supported by Gospel for Asia need your prayers. Their homes and churches make easy targets for angry demonstrators.

Forthcoming Ministry Conference

TOGCON (Thinking Of God Conference) is designed by ministry leaders for ministry leaders, with talks and panels as relevant as possible to people in ministry. Their upcoming conference, to be held at Christ College, Burwood, NSW, from 9am to 3pm on Wednesday, 25 November 2015, will feature Tim Booker speaking on *God's Sovereignty And Word: What Are The Practical Implications In Ministry?* This will be followed by two panel discussions on *Reformed Realisation In Ministry - What Does It Look Like?* Cost for the day will be \$20 (including snacks and refreshments).

Further details: thinkingofgod.org/togcon/ AIM Seeks Church Representatives To Make Their Work More Widely Known

AS part of their push to have Africa Inland Mission better known in Australia and New Zealand, Africa Inland Mission is looking for 100 Church Representatives, people respected in their home church, who can make AIM better known to their congregation. Volunteers would sign an agreement and receive information to use to make AIM known through notices in church bulletins or on church notice boards; passing around AIM literature; showing the occasional AIM short-video in church. Those interested, please contact Len Lesleighter, the director on (02) 4322 4777 or email: director.au@aimint.org for further information, or make this request known to others who might be interested.



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or email: warren.darnley@bigpond.com**

BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

FamilyVoice Event: Three Keys To Explosive Church Growth

FAMILY Voice invites you to an evening with Dr Stuart Robinson at 7.30pm on Friday 2 October at Parkside Ministries International, St John's Rd, Wonga Park. Please pray about attending this pivotal event. Among the world's most travelled, experienced and proven Christian teachers and church builders, Dr Stuart Robinson built one of Australia's largest and most successful churches before expanding his ministry globally. Stuart will reveal the keys that have precipitated church growth around the world and bring direction and encouragement to the church. An offering will be taken. For more details contact Peter Stevens, Victoria State Director, FamilyVoice Australia. Phone 0413 467 831; 1300 365 965 or email

pjs@fava.org.au

Vanuatu Seasonal Workers Chaplaincy

REV Walter and Rosemary Zurrer, who were missionaries in Vanuatu for many years, have been involved with chaplaincy work for Vanuatu Seasonal Workers in the Koo Wee Rup area south east of Melbourne since 2011. The Koo Wee Rup Presbyterian Church is currently being used for a weekly service for about 80 men from Vanuatu

working in the district. Another service has started fortnightly in one of the farmhouses used by the workers as accommodation at Catani. Folk from Drouin and Warragul Presbyterian Churches are assisting at Catani. In total, 300 men are living on 15 different farms spread from Dalmore to Catani. Most are Christians, of whom the majority have a Presbyterian background. Some of the men are Elders in the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu. They have no transport of their own and work long variable hours, so the program has to be flexible. The men are unable to attend regular parish services. Wally and Rosemary would value the prayerful support of the Church.

Evangelism Training In Brisbane

HOW To Tell Your Friends About Jesus is the topic of a meeting with Sam Chan to be presented by City Bible Forum Brisbane from 7-9pm on Tuesday 20 October at Level 1, 143 Ann St, Brisbane. The cost is \$10, including supper. Register at citybibleforum.org/SamChanBrisbane

Q Commons Sydney

CPX, SPARC, and CMA are partnering to bring you Q Commons Sydney at 7pm on Friday 9 October at God In The City, Darlinghurst – global-and-local conversation on faith and culture.

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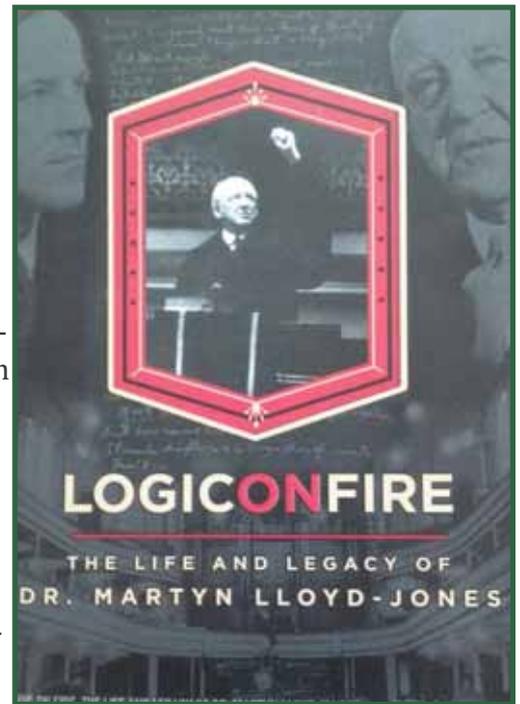
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'Logic On Fire - The Official Martyn Lloyd-Jones Documentary' DVD

DR Martyn Lloyd-Jones has been described by some as the 'greatest preacher of the 20th Century'. His ministry at Westminster Chapel in Buckingham Gate, London spanned the years from before WWII to the end of the sixties. 'Logic on fire' is a phrase he used to characterise what he believed was an essential element in preaching the Bible faithfully and effectively. The *Logic On Fire* DVD comes as an attractively packaged boxed set containing three discs, a cloth bound souvenir book containing a brief biography, as well as information about the contributors and producers of what is described as 'the official Martyn Lloyd-Jones documentary'. Four sermons and postcard sized photographs are also included. It has been produced by Media Gratiae, a Christian Media company in the US, with the approval of both the MLJ Trust and Banner Of Truth.



For contemporary believers who may be unaware of the life and legacy of Martyn Lloyd-Jones this is a particularly valuable resource. For students for the ministry, serving pastors and preachers, our congregations, fellowship and Bible study groups generally, the screening of this would be edifying, challenging and informative. If there is one criticism of the production it is that very little is said about the tremendous blessing the published sermons of MLJ have been to generations of people from all over the world for the last 40 years and more. In particular it would have been most helpful for there to be some reference and recommendation of his book *Preaching And Preachers* and the series of expositions of both *Ephesians* and *Romans*. These are all still in print and available through Christian bookshops. Perhaps one of the effects of the DVD might be that it will whet the viewer's appetite to further explore these very readable, edifying expositions of the Gospel of God's amazing grace. If that is the result then viewing it will have proven to be most beneficial.

Disc 1 contains the official documentary *Logic On Fire* and covers Martyn Lloyd-Jones' early life in Wales, his brief but outstanding career as a medical practitioner, his conversion to Christ and his subsequent call to the pastorate of a small church in Wales and thence to Westminster Chapel as successor to Campbell Morgan. All in all it is a marvellous record of God's grace to sinners and of the blessings that ensue when a pastoral ministry is anchored in the apostolic priorities of prayer, preaching and pastoring. Disc 2 is also heart-warming and informative because it contains a series of interviews with surviving family members, particularly his daughters, people who sat under his ministry at Westminster Chapel, and various well known present day pastors and preachers whose ministries were shaped and blessed by Dr Lloyd-Jones, including Iain Murray, Sinclair Ferguson and many others. Disc 3 contains one episode of a recently released teaching resource entitled *Behold Your God: Rethinking God Biblically* which focuses on the ministry of Dr Lloyd-Jones and is led by Dr John Snyder.

What 'The Doctor' would have made of this production himself can only be imagined. He is on record as once describing the tape recordings of sermons as 'an abomination'. This was because of his assertion that proper preaching was an 'event', and involved an exchange between hearer and preacher, which when undertaken with the unction of the Holy Spirit is often accompanied by 'the presence of God', so in order to truly benefit and experience all that God does through good preaching one must be present as part of the congregation. That said, it is now possible for multitudes of individuals from all generations and from all over the world to reap the benefits and blessings of God's gift to His church in the form of the life and ministry of one of His most able preachers.

– Rev Julian Bull, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Perth, WA

PERSECUTION WATCH

INDIA – Women Beaten Unconscious In Raid On Prayer Meeting

HINDU extremists launched a vicious attack on a prayer meeting in Jharkhand state which left six Christians needing hospital treatment. One woman aged in her 60s was beaten unconscious.

Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Jharkhand State where militants have apparently stepped up their persecution of Christians in recent months. In what was one of the worst attacks, extremists armed with guns, axes, spades and clubs attacked the prayer meeting in Hututag village, Palamu district, earlier this month.

The assault began when Hindus entered a home where members of Anugrah (Grace) Church had gathered, and started insulting them. They demanded that the meeting stop, but the Christians refused.

Later, 15 extremists surrounded the house and demanded to see the pastor, Sarvajit Bharti, whom members had hidden on the roof. When they could not find Pastor Sarvajit, the extremists attacked church members, beating two women, one aged 60, unconscious and leaving others seriously injured. At least six needed hospital treatment.

'Since April of this year we have been pressured to choose between Christ and our lives,' says Pastor Sarvajit, who had to relocate from the village in July. Across the state Christians have faced intimidation, discrimination and death threats since July, in what appears to be a concerted campaign by Hindu extremists to drive them out. Please pray that God will strengthen the faith of His people in Jharkhand so they will stand firm in the face of intense pressure. Pray especially for those who were injured in the attack.

Pray that Christians across India will know God's peace and presence in new ways and that converts to Christianity would not be tempted to turn back to Hinduism when they face opposition.

Pray that Narendra Modi, the Indian Prime Minister, will keep his pledge earlier this year to uphold religious rights and take firm action to defend India's Christian minority against extremists.

– Morning Star News via Release International

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GOOD NEWS FROM ABROAD:

Church Growing In The UAE

INTERSERVE reports that contrary to popular opinion in the media, Christianity is far from dead in the Middle East, and one place where this is very evident is Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

The Pew Research Centre has the number of Christians in the Arabian Peninsula at around 2.3 million, whilst the Gulf Christian Fellowship, an umbrella group, estimates 3.5 million.

Foreigners now make up more than 70% of the population of the UAE, most of them coming from other Arab countries, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and the Philippines. More than half of these foreign workers are Christians, which means that Christians account for more than 35% of the population.

One thing that shows that ministry is growing is the creation of new churches, one such church being St Paul's Catholic Church, located in Mus-safah, a satellite town of Abu Dhabi. This church was established to cater for the 60,000 to 70,000 Christians working and living in the surrounding area, many of whom are migrant workers. Some local Arabs have also joined the church.

Medical Missions is another of the Christian growth areas, with teams working alongside community leaders and members, community hospitals, clinics, and health posts to provide a wide range of medical care to meet local needs. Clinic days are long and arduous, but immeasurably productive and rewarding, ministering to whole families and communities.

With the media focus at the moment on the mass exodus of Christians from Iraq and Syria, we could be forgiven for thinking that there is little hope. However, some of the oldest standing buildings in the Middle East are Christian churches, a testimony to the resilience and continuity of Christianity despite times of persecution. God is still at work in this region, and His Church is alive and growing.

Give thanks for the growing church in the United Arab Emirates, and for the millions of Christians working and living there.

Pray for these Christians, for opportunities to share their faith and to be a witness to the Arab communities around them.

Pray for the continuing growth of the Church across the Middle East, and for protection for Christians, especially in Iraq and Syria.

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The Early Church Presses On Toward The Goal

READ LUKE 24.46,47 AND ACTS 1.8

LUKE is the author of *Luke’s Gospel* and *The Book Of Acts*. These verses provide the bridge between the two volumes.

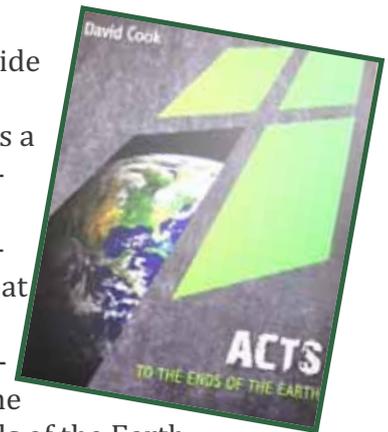
In Luke 24.46,47 Jesus summarises the purpose of God. Notice that v.46 is a good summary of the *Gospel Of Luke*—the suffering, the death and resurrection of the Christ. Verse 47 is a good summary of *Acts*—that same Gospel being preached to the ends of the Earth. Notice that v.47 is as much the purpose of God as v.46, the broadcast of the Gospel, mission, and evangelism is at the very heart of God’s ongoing purpose until His Son returns.

Acts 1.8 is a similar verse to Luke 24.47. It sets the pattern for the unfolding narrative of *Acts*. The Holy Spirit will come on the church to empower the church for witness in ever-widening circles until the Gospel reaches the ends of the Earth.

This tells us that Luke’s purpose, under God, in writing *Acts* is to show the triumphant progress of the Gospel, through Judea, into Samaria, throughout Asia, into Europe and finally to Rome. However, this is not triumphalism, for the Gospel messenger will be opposed, tortured, imprisoned and martyred. There will be opposition from the outside religious and commercial interests and even dissension within the church, yet the Gospel will progress and people will come to Christ. ‘God buries His messengers but finishes His work’, as John Wesley said.

Luke, in the original Greek, concludes his account in Acts 28.31 with the word ‘unhinderedly’. The march of the Gospel is ongoing, it has not yet ceased. The book of *Acts* provides the church of the 21st Century with its mandate and your mandate for today. You have the Holy Spirit. He will empower you today for witness to Christ in a lost world.

‘All hope in ministry lies in the Spirit of God operating on the spirit of men.’
 – C.H. Spurgeon.

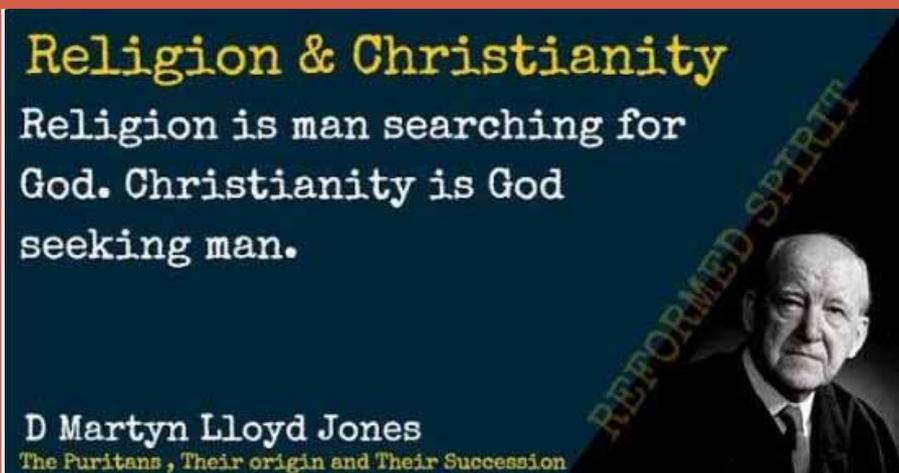


FOR REFLECTION:

Think of the people you contact and of your witness to them. How can it be more effective? Do you think we make Luke 24.47 of lesser importance than Luke 24.46? What effect does this have on the church?

Content taken from 'ACTS: To The Ends Of The earth' by David Cook, published by 10Publishing, used with permission.

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BOOKS WORTH READING

HIS LOVE ENDURES FOR EVER: Reflections On The Love Of God, Garry J. Williams, Nottingham: IVP, 2015. ISBN 978-1-78359-283-8

GARY Williams teaches at London Theological Seminary and Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. In his latest book he provides a doctrinal and devotional exploration of the love of God. Williams alerts us to the danger of repeating the words 'God is love' as a formula without thinking what we are saying, for it can be (and often has been) seriously misunderstood. What is needed is that we understand this statement in its wider biblical context and in co-ordination with other great Bible truths (eg 'God is light').

The 12 chapters of this book each consist of a doctrinal explanation of some aspect of God's love, followed by a meditation on its spiritual significance and a closing prayer. Williams is serious in his aim of addressing both head and heart. We discover that God's love is immeasurably greater and more wonderful than our own poor version, so that His love is not to be judged by human standards.

As fragile and fallen creatures we cannot know God and his love unaided. We are bound to have wrong ideas about his love that need to be corrected by the light of Scripture, and this calls for humility and repentance. We need the saving work of God the Son and the renewing work of God the Spirit, with the Christ-focussed Scriptures as our infallible guide to the truth about God. The Bible is a rich mosaic of images that together show us what God is really like.

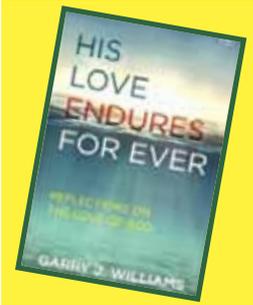
The fact of the Trinity means that God did not need to create the world to have someone to love. God's love is anterior to all other loves, and so it is the definition and test of all other loves. The Father eternally loves the Son and His Spirit, and they respond in love to Him. Williams gives a moving description of this eternal divine love-community. God is not selfish to love Himself and His glory first of all and above all, and our love is disordered and misplaced if we do not love God before all other objects. There are, of course, other legitimate lesser loves (eg spouse, family) that find their proper proportion in relation to our chief love for God, otherwise they will turn into forms of enslavement and abuse and lead to the loss and death of the thing or one we love.

Williams does a good job of explaining spiritual adoption, whereby through Christ we have God as our loving, ever-present Father. God's love of diversity is on display in the myriad variations in creatures and in His plan to save people from all nations and races. This diversity reflects the richness of God's own inter-Trinitarian relations. God is also sovereign in His love, and through the miracle of regeneration He enables us to love what previously we hated and rejected. A realistic awareness of our sinful tendencies should make us rejoice in the truth of irresistible grace.

God's love is different from fickle human love because His love is unchangeable. Being outside of time, God is changeless in His will and purposes. God's love is the one love we can totally rely on. Williams tackles the difficult concept of divine impassibility (God is not subject to changing emotions), but He does truly love and He always hates sin and wrong. His affections do not come and go. God loves us, even though He knows the extent of our sin, and He turns to us in compassion. But God does not wink at our sin. He deals with it in the cross of Christ, the place where God's love and justice meet in perfect concord.

Williams helpfully points out that it is the difference between God and us that explains why God will not forgive without seeking satisfaction for sin, whereas we should (and are commanded) to forgive and not to take vengeance. God is the Moral Governor of the Universe; we are not! We are not to nurse a grudge or seek personal vengeance, for when we do so, we are playing God, and that is not our role. A persistent theme through this book is that God is not like us. It could be suggested that this is the root of all heresy (wrong thinking about God), namely when we make God just a bigger version of ourselves. God does not love people because they are beautiful; he loves the unlovely and causes them to become beautiful. Here, then, is a book that should leave us in raptures at the wonder of God's love, lead us to desire to love God more, and motivate us to give ourselves in loving service of others.

– Greg Goswell



Williams is serious in his aim of addressing both head and heart.

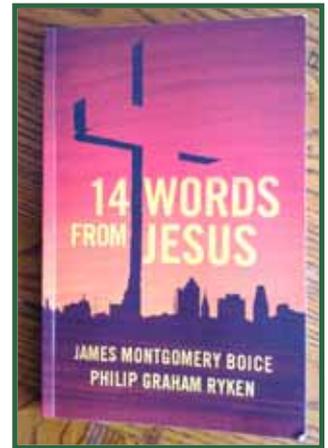
We discover that God's love is immeasurably greater and more wonderful than our own poor version, so that His love is not to be judged by human standards.'

BOOKS WORTH READING

14 WORDS FROM JESUS, James Montgomery Boice And Philip Graham Ryken, 1999, Crossway Books. Reprinted 2013, Christian Focus, Fearn. ISBN 978 1 89191 205 8.

NOW that people aged 65 and over constitute Australia's fastest growing age group, questions and thoughts on how to spend the rest of life are becoming more and more urgent. No one wants to waste their limited time, including young followers of Jesus, and everyone wants to reach the goal of finishing well. How would you like to finish your life as wise men and women? What would you like your last words for your last moments to be? Would you keep chasing things which are mortal such as seeking pleasure, while not knowing the vanity of living wisely (Ecclesiastics 2.12-26)?

To help us answer these questions is *14 Words From Jesus* – seven words from the Cross and seven sayings of Jesus after His resurrection. This sermon series of the late Rev Dr James Montgomery Boice, known as a champion of strict interpretation of the Bible and the Rev Dr Philip G Ryken (four and ten sermons each respectively) was preached at noontime as half-hour services each Friday during Lenten seasons for those working in city offices near the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia who might not be regular church goers.



If you plan to spend the rest of your life in being more engaged in the Heavenly Father's business, this book is for you, as it shows you how to give all you have, as Jesus gave all He had on the Cross for us. If you are either a person who has not realised that the Cross is central to Christianity, or underestimate the importance of what Jesus accomplished for His people on the Cross, or think the word of the Cross is not the most urgent message for all people right now, this mini book will be a blessing. If you want to see the Gospel of the saving work of Jesus Christ being proclaimed clearly and forcefully from the pulpit and lived out through the presence and practice of its people in your own unique situation, this book will be a great help.

'For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.' (1Corinthians 1.18, ESV)

– Phillip Chang

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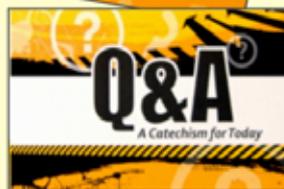
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